

Written Testimony of Reach Out and Read CT  
**IN SUPPORT OF SB 209**  
Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06106  
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**AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE REACH OUT AND READ PROGRAM.  
To provide funding to support the Reach Out and Read program.  
Introduced by: Committee on Children**

Good afternoon, Connecticut State Legislators,

My name is Susan K. McCann, and I serve on the Advisory Board Committee for Reach Out and Read CT. I am writing to you in support of SB 209.

**Who we are:**

Reach Out and Read is a national, non-profit organization that partners with medical providers to develop critical early reading skills in children and support healthy brain and social/emotional development.

**How we do it:**

Across Connecticut, Reach Out and Read medical providers provide parents with personalized, age-appropriate advice about books and reading at every well-child visit from 6 months through 5 years, along with the gift of a new developmentally and culturally appropriate book.

**Why do we do it:** Research consistently shows that children growing up in low-income families are at the highest risk of reading failure and entering school behind grade level. These children are typically 12-14 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills by the time they enter kindergarten and they rarely catch up; the disparities persist throughout their lives.

**Why we work:** Reach Out and Read increases parent involvement in their children's lives. Children served by Reach Out and Read are read to more often, have stronger pre-literacy skills, and are better prepared for success in school. The body of published research supporting the efficacy of the Reach Out and Read model is more extensive than for any other psychosocial intervention in general pediatrics, distinguishing Reach Out and Read from all other early literacy interventions.

**Impact of Reach Out and Read Nationally:** 15 published research studies show that during the preschool years, children served by Reach Out and Read score 3-6 months ahead of their non-Reach Out and Read peers on vocabulary tests, are read to more often and are better prepared for success in school. In fact, the **American Academy of Pediatrics** has cited Reach Out and Read as a best practice program for book distribution and development of oral language and early literacy skills in the pediatric exam room in their 2014 policy statement, "Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice." See <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/06/19/peds.2014-1384.full.pdf+html>

**Impact of Reach Out and Read CT:** 71 clinical locations; 39, 824 children participate annually, and 65, 956 new books are distributed annually.

**Why I personally support Reach Out and Read CT:** Through my educational background and career, I have advocated for and strongly supported community and family literacy practices. I've owned a small book nook called Essex Books, in which I've invited award-winning children's authors and illustrators to talk to children and families in the community. I've co-produced The Big Book Getaway at Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, CT (twice); The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center in Old Saybrook, CT (twice), and The Bee & Thistle Inn in Old Lyme, CT (three times), which featured several bestselling authors from across the country. In fact, during the launch of The Big Book Getaway in February, 2013, we asked Senator Art Linares and Representative Phil Miller to present a Proclamation to CT publisher Amy Newmark in honor of her 20<sup>th</sup> year of publishing *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. I am an educational consultant in the field of children's media. I have also been a preschool teacher for three- and four-year-old children, and have served as a head camp counselor for four-year-old children entering kindergarten. I hold a BA in English from the College of the Holy Cross; an M.A. in Educational Technology from The University of Michigan, and an M.S in Educational Psychology from Fordham University. My father is a physician and my mother is a retired elementary school principal, and, most importantly, I am a parent. As such, I greatly support Reach Out and Read CT and the impact that pediatricians across Connecticut (and the United States) can have on the development of children's and family literacy.

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Susan K. McCann, MA, MS  
Reach Out and Read CT Advisory Board Member